

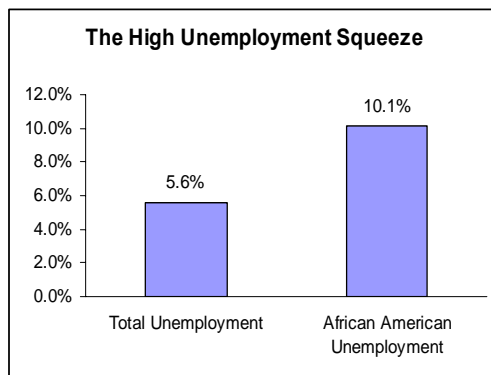


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Black Middle Class: Getting Squeezed

► **Summary:** This year, America celebrated the anniversaries of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, two events that improved opportunities for African Americans and helped to create a new generation of middle class black families. But apparently no one told Republican economic advisors – President Bush's and Congress' economic policies are reversing this trend by squeezing incomes and failing to address rising costs for middle class families.

When President Bush refused an invitation to attend the NAACP's convention, he became the first President since Herbert Hoover not to meet with the NAACP during his four years in office. Why would the President avoid meeting with this distinguished group? Perhaps it's because, under his watch, African Americans have been especially affected by the middle-class squeeze. Consider these four issues – jobs, education, healthcare, and transportation.



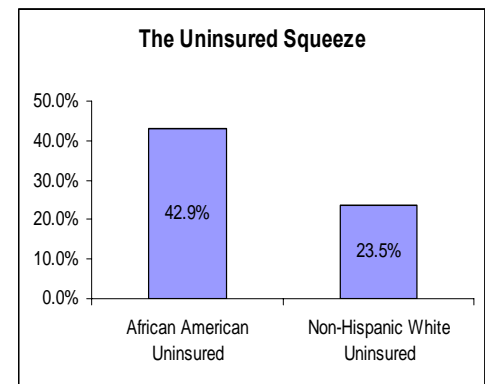
Jobs & Income: In June, the national unemployment rate was 5.6 percent. **But the unemployment rate among African Americans was nearly double that – 10.1 percent.** And last September, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that median income among black households fell by 3 percent in 2002 and has fallen by more than 6 percent since 2000. The median household incomes of non-Hispanic whites, in comparison, showed no significant decline.

Despite these troubling statistics, the President and Congress have done nothing to alleviate rising costs that are squeezing many black families' budgets.

Education: High school educated African Americans will earn three quarters of a million dollars less over their lifetimes compared to African Americans with a college education. But the cost of attending college makes higher education increasingly inaccessible. In 2003, rising tuition and administrative costs closed off college to 250,000 qualified students. Though the government has several tools to make college more affordable, it has refused to do a thing. Republicans have even backtracked on a promise to increase the maximum Pell Grant award, even though nearly 40 percent of black students rely on Pell Grants to pay for college.

Health care: According to *Families USA*, **nearly 2 in 5 non-elderly African Americans went without health insurance between 2002 and 2003.** Research shows that families that lack health care have a harder time making ends meet in general, and have a harder time getting ahead in the labor market.

Transportation: More than half of all black families live in major metropolitan areas, and they confront steadily **rising transportation costs** as they travel to work, to school, and to other essential activities. Since 2001, 90 percent of transit agencies across the United States have increased their fares, taking a bite out of family incomes. Despite these increases, the President has threatened to veto a bill to invest needed resources for local transit priorities. Meanwhile, with gas prices up 27 percent since last year, the average two-car family could be spending thousands more a year on gas.



High unemployment, declining earnings, higher education and transportation costs, and no access to health insurance coverage? That's what we call squeezing the middle class.

Each week, the **Middle Class Squeeze** looks at different aspects of how Bush Administration and congressional policies are failing the middle class.
For more information, please call 202-225-2095 or visit www.house.gov/georgemiller.

Feeling squeezed? Send us an email about it: middleclasssqueeze@mail.house.gov